

NSC BRIEFING

11 February 1958

CHOU EN-LAI QUILS AS FOREIGN MINISTER

(Lany)

- I. Chou En-lai's resignation as foreign minister does not indicate that he has slipped from position as number three man in the hierarchy (Liu Shao-chi is number 2) or that a major struggle for power is now going on in Peiping.
- A. Move--announced as being on Chou's initiative--came the day after he delivered major foreign policy speech at National People's Congress on 10 February.
- B. Chou retains his post as premier, from which he will continue to direct activities of foreign ministry.
- C. The new foreign minister, Chen ^{Yi} ~~X~~, probably Chou's choice. Closely associated with Chou for many years, often used by Chou as general utility man.
- D. Both men slated to visit North Korea very soon to discuss possible withdrawal of ChiCom troops.
- II. Move appears designed to free Chou for more important business. Chou has been both premier and foreign minister since 1949.
- A. With Mao Tse-tung aging, Chou may want more time available to insure that he gets proper share of powers which would devolve on Mao's three chief lieutenants: Liu Shao-chi, Chou and Teng Hsiao-ping.
- B. Chou probably wants to supervise "streamlining" of ChiCom government now in progress.

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C. Chou himself may be declining in vigor. His remarks to newsmen in the fall of 1956 suggested possibility he might step down as foreign minister because of ill health.

III. Chicom foreign policy expected to follow line set by Chou in speech on 10 February with Chou probably taking charge himself on crucial matters.

A. Main points made by Chou were:

1. Chicom confidence in USSR, continued close alignment with Moscow.
2. Vituperative rejection of "two Chinas" concept.
3. Courtship of Asian neutrals.
4. Offer to take "initiative" in removal of foreign troops from Korea.

IV. Chen ~~W~~^Y, a party veteran of 57 with extensive military experience, is an affable man but lacks Chou's skill as negotiator and public relations operator.

A. Peiping may believe, however, that he would be more suitable than Chou for possible negotiations with Taipei.

1. Chen was author of article last spring on past Communist-Nationalist cooperation.
2. Rumors current in Hong Kong during same period that he negotiating with Chinats.